

Pullin' Weeds Plantin' Seeds

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Live and Love Like Him

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In the last newsletter, I shared with you that the Thessalonian Church was known for their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope. They believed that Jesus Christ was coming again, and it changed the way they lived. Living in the light of Christ's return motivated them to sound out the Word of God and spread forth the Gospel message.

As I studied, there was something else that I noted about Paul and the Thessalonian believers, and that was the love they had for one another.

The first thing I noticed was that Paul was an example of patient love. He says, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (I Thessalonians 2:7-8). These verses describe the care and nurture of those new, "baby" Christians. Mature Christians must be willing to help others along. We cannot expect them to know everything! We must be patient, kind, and love them as they learn and grow.

Paul exhorted them, comforted them, and charged them "as a father doth his children" (vs. 11) because he loved them. Later in this chapter, he

called them his glory and joy. He recognized the importance and value of the lost being saved and having a hope of being together with them in the presence of the Lord one day.

Do you ever take time to consider the joy in heaven of seeing those you have led to the LORD or encouraged in the LORD?

It's important to note that the Thessalonian church responded to Paul's teaching. They were humble enough to be willing to learn and grow. We must be careful to approach opportunities to sit under the teaching and preaching of God's Word in the same way. Too often, we come to church and our heart is not engaged. We aren't prepared to listen and respond. We focus too much on the teacher or preacher and their flaws or quirks rather than the message from God's Word.

Most – unfortunately not all (which is a whole other topic) – spiritual leaders are striving to live holy lives and lead their people in a way that pleases the LORD. We need to recognize that God put our spiritual leaders in place, and as long as they are following God, we should be willing to follow them. Submit to them. Allow them to exhort, comfort, and charge us to walk worthy of God.

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Runnin On Empty Quotes

LORD, empty me of me, so I can be filled with You.

If you are not hungry for God, you are probably full of yourself.

SUSANNAH SPURGEON – Our God delights in what men deem extremities, He tarries for a crisis – and why? In order that He should be looked up to for wisdom, strength, and deliverance; and that when Deliverance comes, He should have all the glory.

AW TOZER – The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they haven't yet come to the end of themselves. We're still trying to give orders, and interfering with God's Work with in us.

MATTHEW 5:6 – Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

In chapter three, we see that Paul sent Timothy to check on the Thessalonian church, specifically to establish them and to comfort them (3:2). He wanted them to stand fast in the Lord, grow in holiness, and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men (3:8, 12-13).

Is that our desire for our church family? Do we even take time to consider what we want for our church spiritually?

Paul brings up their love for one another again in chapter four, saying, “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (4:9). That is quite a compliment! There was no need to write to them about loving one another. Why? Their teacher was God, the Author and Source of all love. We have that same teacher, and the completed Word of God, to teach us to love one another.

Are we willing to learn and actually apply what God teaches us about loving others?

When we get to chapter five, Paul once again reminds them to comfort one another. He wanted them to come alongside and encourage each other. Remind one another of God’s promises! He also tells them to edify one another. Build one another up in the faith. Grow in holiness.

As I considered this, I was challenged to invest more in others. Take the time to make visits and phone calls. Send the card of encouragement. Be willing to be inconvenienced to comfort and edify others!

As the chapter progresses, there are several “rapid fire” commands for us as we live in light of Christ’s imminent return. I believe that among them we will find instruction for how to deal with every type of church member that we encounter.

Paul tells us to know them which labour *among* you and are *over* you in the Lord (vs. 12-13). I love that it says *among* and *over*. Spiritual leaders should be serving alongside us in our churches, and we are to know – have regard for, cherish – and esteem them. Love and appreciate them.

Remember the vast majority of spiritual leaders are striving to please the LORD in how they lead their churches, Sunday school classes, the music, etc. They are attempting to follow God’s Word. Problems arise in churches when we become overly critical of the leadership and are unwilling to submit to their God-given authority. It’s reasonable and right that we have high expectations of them, but we shouldn’t hold them to a higher standard than we do for ourselves. And on that note, we should be praying for them! Satan wants to destroy those spiritual leaders because he knows the consequences will be far reaching.

When the church family is following godly spiritual leaders, there will be peace (vs. 13b). We will be unified with everyone working together for the common goal of spreading forth the Gospel.

Warren Wiersbe said, “Whenever you find division and dissension in a local church, it is usually because of selfishness and sin on the part of the leaders – or the members – or both.”

Then we are told to warn the unruly, meaning those that are out of order

and causing trouble. Later in II Thessalonians, Paul would tell them to withdraw themselves from those that walk disorderly. If someone is deviating from the Truth, the teachings of God’s Word, we should abstain from familiar communication and connection with them.

Paul goes on to say, “...comfort the feebleminded, support the weak...” (I Thessalonians 5:14). The feebleminded are those that are fainthearted or the “quitters.” The weak are those that lack confidence. We are told to comfort them. Strengthen them. Support them. Encourage them.

How patient and loving are you toward the spiritually weak?

Finally, we read, “...be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (vs. 14b-15).

Relationships handled with spiritual maturity will be marked by humility, longsuffering, kindness, and forgiveness. See Philippians 2:1-8 and Colossians 3:12-17.

The Thessalonian church was motivated by love. Their love for the LORD caused them to live differently as they waited for Christ’s return. Their love for the lost prompted them to sound out and spread forth the Gospel. And their love for one another demonstrated what a healthy church family should look like.

How’s your love today? For the LORD? For the lost? For your church family? 🌱

